

So comprehensive had been the growth of the degrees-conferring visionary colleges that reports related under one roof in Washington, D. C., were listed fifty "educational institutions," and that in the city of Washington one group of men had incorporated 200 "colleges" and "universities."

Diploma mill investigations were waged actively in Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Texas.

Although thorough investigation disclosed but two instances where California licenses had been obtained by fraud, yet the odium attached to the prominence of Pacific Medical College credentials bartered by the national diploma mill, stirred the California board to renewed interest in strengthening our laws to cope with the purveyors and users of fraudulent professional credentials. In this fight for decent standards and to punish the offenders, the California board was opposed by astute attorneys, and had the funds of the medical board been limited, the battle would have been lost. Witnesses brought from Missouri and elsewhere testified to the purchase and sale of Pacific Medical College diplomas as well as transcripts showing an alleged course of medical study completed by the purchaser. The medical license of the president and owner of the Pacific Medical College was revoked. After four years consumed in the usual court procedures involved in cases on appeal, the higher court sustained the California board's revocation.

California's experience in attempting to penalize those who sell or attempt to use fraudulent credentials disclosed that our state law was deplorably weak.

Difficulties encountered in endeavoring to punish the diploma mill conspirators in California brought about the introduction by the California Board of Medical Examiners of what is termed the "diploma mill bill" passed by the legislature in 1927, now a law which makes illegal the use or sale of any fraudulent diploma, credentials, etc., in an attempt to secure from any of the licensing boards mentioned a license to practice the healing art. The penalty for violation of this statute is one to three years in the state prison or a fine of from \$1000 to \$3000, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

Two individuals have been convicted under this "diploma mill bill," and the publicity given these cases has served as a warning to others.

The effectiveness of a regulatory law such as the "diploma mill bill" depends on the interest of the administrative officer of the Board of Medical Examiners and his intuition born of years of experience in uncovering attempts to secure a medical license by fraud.

CALIFORNIA MEDICAL LEGISLATION

Regarding S. B. 175 (Fellom): The Bill to Permit Corporations to Practice Medicine for Profit

On pages 236-237 of the September 1931 number of *CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE* was printed the California Senate roll call on S. B. 175 (Fellom), which bill would have given corporations the right to practice medicine for profit in California. It was hoped that the information there given would suggest to the officers of county societies that letters of appreciation be sent from their respective county societies and/or members to the state senators who voted against S. B. 175 (Fellom) becoming a law.

The California Medical Association Committee on Public Policy and Legislation, through its chairman, Dr. Junius B. Harris, sent to each of the senators who voted against S. B. 175 (Fellom) the following letter:

My Dear Senator —:

Under separate cover we are sending you a copy of the September issue of *California and Western Medi-*

cine, the official publication of the California Medical Association, an organization of more than five thousand of the registered physicians and surgeons of California.

On page 236 of this issue under the caption "Medical Legislation," you will find some excerpts from the "Senate Daily Journal," giving the roll call on Senate Bill 175, which bill would have given corporations the right to practice medicine for profit.

It has occurred to us that you might be interested in the brief comments there made.

As you were one of the senators who voted against this bill, we wish you to know that we believe members of the county medical association from your own district, as well as members of the medical profession throughout California are deeply appreciative.

Yours very truly,

JUNIUS B. HARRIS, M. D.,

Chairman of the Committee on Public Policy and Legislation.

Among replies received from state senators who were so addressed are letters printed below. It is hoped that all county societies will write to their respective senators who voted against Senate Bill 175 (Fellom). Two of the reply letters follow:

November 3, 1931.

My Dear Doctor:

I received your very pleasant letter of October 31, also copy of the medical legislation, and am glad that my vote on the bill referred to was pleasing to you.

Very truly yours,

RALPH E. SWING.

Friend June:

Thanks very much for the magazine and for your kind favor of October 31.

Those of us in public life get so many brickbats an occasional bouquet is a wonderful help to our spirits. Seriously speaking, I was delighted to be of assistance and will be glad to cooperate with you at any time.

Very truly yours,

J. M. INMAN.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO*

EXCERPTS FROM OUR STATE MEDICAL JOURNAL

Volume IV, No. 12, December 1906.

From some editorial notes:

The Gerino Decision.—In view of the close resemblance of this decision to that handed down by the Supreme Court, already referred to as the case *ex parte Gerino*, it would seem to be not amiss to quote the salient portion of that now celebrated decision.

"It being proper for the legislature to demand some standard of efficiency, as we have seen, we think it equally within its powers to declare that it shall be the same as that required by an association composed of colleges devoted to the work of preparing persons for the profession. Evidently the standard of proficiency in scholarship as a preparation, and the particular studies necessary to secure a fair preparation, must change as the discoveries in natural science open new fields of investigation and suggest or reveal new curative agencies. The legislature cannot successfully prescribe in advance a standard to meet new and changing conditions. The method adopted appears to be sufficiently definite to enable all colleges to reach the required standard when in good faith they desire to do so. . . ."

Other Plans.—Other journals have attacked the American Medical Association, its *Journal* and the Council on Pharmacy; other journals will continue to do so, and in other ways. Be assured that the interests opposing this present movement to try and secure simple honesty in the making and marketing of remedies intended for physicians' use are very

*This column strives to mirror the work and aims of colleagues who bore the brunt of state society work some twenty-five years ago. It is hoped that such presentation will be of interest to both old and recent members.

numerous and very rich and, moreover, are in the habit of doing their work in "ways that are dark"; indeed, they naturally shun the light. For the first time in the history of this country, a considerable number of physicians have gotten together in the formation of medical societies and in supporting the American Medical Association. For the first time in our history it is possible for any considerable number of us to know what is being done and to participate in any particular kind of work or undertaking. So long as that condition remains, so long as the American Medical Association and our component state and county medical societies remain strong and active, the members taking an intelligent interest in what is going on for or against their best interests and those of their patients, just so long will the fight for decency, honesty, and truth be a successful fight. The hope of the man whose profit is in dishonesty, is that discord may be brought about. With a profession divided into warring units, he can succeed; with a profession united in harmonious societies, all working for the common good and the public benefit, he can do nothing—he is forced to be honest or quit. Let no innuendo blind you to the actual facts and the truth in this whole matter. . . .

From an article on "Diet in Disease" by George K. Abbott, M.D., Loma Linda.

The wide difference of opinion, not only among the laity but also among the members of the medical profession, in regard to the natural and best dietary in health has given rise to so many theories and dietetic fads that it is not possible to come to any conclusion as to a proper dietary by the consideration of such. . . .

From an article on "Proprietary Medicines and Their Abuses" by George Dock, M.D., Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Proprietary medicines are substances which someone has an exclusive right to make or sell for medicinal purposes. The exclusive right may depend on secret methods of manufacture, or on patent on the method of preparation, as in Germany, or on process and substance both, as in America, or on a copyright on the substance. . . .

From an article on "A Medical Library for San Francisco" by Douglass W. Montgomery, M.D.

All who love medical literature and the advancement of medicine in this city wish to see the most made of the fine gift of the late Levi C. Lane's widow. That a combination of the County Medical Society's Library and the Lane Library would form a larger, finer foundation than either of them separately, there can be no doubt; but the start must be made properly or the combination will end in failure, and less will be gained than if such a coalition had never been attempted.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

By GILES S. PORTER, M. D.

Director

Mortality in 1930.—An analysis of deaths that occurred in California during 1930 reveals interesting data relative to the trend of mortality in some of the major causes. A total of 66,178 deaths were registered in this state last year. Of these deaths, 16,176 or almost 25 per cent were due to diseases of the circulatory system; more than 15 per cent of all deaths, 7195, were due to cancer and 6394 were due to diseases of the nervous system. Last year, for the first time, deaths from diseases of the nervous system exceeded deaths from tuberculosis in California, of which there were 5629 recorded. More than half of all deaths (53.5 per cent) were due to the four causes

mentioned above—diseases of the circulatory system, cancer, diseases of the nervous system and tuberculosis.

Diseases of the respiratory system claimed 4895 lives, and deaths from nephritis totaled 4813. There were 4460 deaths from diseases of the digestive system and deaths from external causes exclusive of automobile deaths, totaled 3169. Epidemic diseases caused 2793 deaths, and deaths from other general diseases totaled 2655. There were 2573 deaths from early infancy and malformations, and 2356 automobile deaths. There were 1509 suicides. Deaths from non-venereal genito-urinary causes were 914; the total number of deaths from puerperal causes reached 443. Deaths from senility were only 204.

The increasing number of deaths from cancer and diseases of the nervous system provides interesting material for study. The number of deaths from these two causes totaled 13,589, as compared with 16,176 deaths from diseases of the circulatory system. It would appear that there may be a possibility of these two causes, together, eventually displacing the lead which deaths from diseases of the circulatory system have always maintained. The decreasing number of deaths from tuberculosis is conspicuous. The total deaths from this cause in 1930 constituted but 8.5 per cent of the total number of deaths from all causes.

The increasing number of automobile deaths is receiving a great deal of attention. It is interesting to note that more than 40 per cent of all deaths from external causes last year were due to automobile deaths. Deaths in the industries do not occur as frequently as they did in former years, and it would appear that automobile deaths may soon constitute the major portion of all deaths from external causes. The relatively few number of deaths from epidemic diseases, 2793, indicates that efforts exerted in their control have not been in vain. The large number of deaths from suicides constitutes a problem for sociologists and mental hygienists. The increasing number of suicides each year indicates that there may be need for the application of some remedy, undiscovered as yet, to prevent the increase in the number of deaths from this cause.

Typhoid Fever Reported.—A considerable number of cases of typhoid fever, contracted through drinking water from contaminated streams, have been reported in California this summer. A special investigation within the river area of Sacramento County revealed the fact that twenty-six persons who had contracted typhoid fever had been drinking raw river water or had been swimming in the Sacramento or American rivers.

Along the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz County ten cases of typhoid fever have been reported during the summer months. The exact source of infection has not been determined, but it is probable that swimming in the polluted San Lorenzo River is responsible for the infection.

Discharge of sewage from the Boulder Creek district into the San Lorenzo River has been discontinued. Sewage in the future will be disposed of on the premises of each individual owner by means of septic tanks or cesspools. In making this change 101 septic tanks and cesspools have been provided. Practically all improvements with reference to sewage disposal on premises situated adjacent to the San Lorenzo River and its tributaries have been completed. The citizens of Brookdale are now making arrangements to install a new sewer system under the State Act.

Cold Storage Investigation.—During the past month an investigation was undertaken to determine how the Cold Storage Act is being observed with respect to the requirement that persons owning articles of food in storage for one year must have a permit from the State Department of Public Health in order to obtain an extension of the storage period. The investigation